



News Release

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GEORGIA JOINS NATION IN FOCUSING ON FOREST ARSON

The Georgia Forestry Commission is partnering with the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to focus attention on the problem of wildland arson. May 1-7 has been designated by the United States Fire Administration (USFA) as 2016 Arson Awareness Week.

In 2015, nearly eight percent of Georgia's 3,224 wildfires were caused by arson, burning close to 3,000 acres. Nationally, from 2010-2014, 23% of fires reported were arson.

"The Georgia Forestry Commission employs forestry investigators who are certified law enforcement officers with full arrest and enforcement authority and specialized training in law enforcement, fire investigation, and other forestry related crimes," said Brian Clavier, Chief of Law Enforcement for the Georgia Forestry Commission. "Since 2009, GFC investigators have filed 121 criminal charges as a result of investigations."

In Georgia, Arson of Lands is a felony, punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a \$50,000 fine.

Arson Awareness Week 2016 is presenting a special focus on arson fires in the wildland urban interface, where more than 72,000 US communities are at risk from wildfire. Through the theme, *Prevent Wildfire Arson - Spread the Facts Not the Fire*, agency partners are raising awareness about the importance of creating fire-adapted communities that can help protect these vulnerable areas.

In addition to the GFC and Department of Homeland Security, Arson Awareness Week partners include the US Forest Service, National Association of State Foresters, the Department of the Interior's Office of Wildland Fires, International Association of Arson Investigators and National Volunteer Fire Council, among others.

For more information regarding Arson Awareness Week and its initiatives, visit www.usfa.fema.gov/aaw. For information about arson in Georgia and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, go to GaTrees.org.

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